

# THE WILSON BULLETIN

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## EDITORIAL

The annual meeting was held at Ann Arbor and was carried out as planned in every particular. The attendance was fully up to expectations. A full account of the meeting will be published in the March issue.

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In the writer's boyhood a well-known lecturer (name forgotten) visited many parts of the country with a lecture entitled "Seeing the Elephant." Three blind men were taken to the circus to "see" the elephant. One took hold of the tail, another felt of the trunk, and the third surrounded a leg. Each one carried away a different impression of the elephant. Likewise, perhaps, different ornithologists have different impressions of the nature and importance of ornithology, according to the different phases of it with which they come in contact. So, our closet naturalists, or systematists, got hold of the tail and thought they had the whole thing; life history students surrounded the leg and took little interest in the rest; bird banders are feeling the trunk and are getting a wonderful sensation. All need to realize that the real body is greater than the parts. But many of us never get beyond the blind man stage.

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A recent issue of one of the leading ornithological magazines of the world carries an advertisement of an important ornithological work now being issued. The publishers announce that "In order that this work shall not depreciate commercially, [the publishers] guarantee that, after its completion and on a date hereafter to be given, the unsold copies (if any) with the exception of a very limited number which will be retained for retail purposes, shall be destroyed."

This is probably a custom brought up from the past, and which we think hardly befits the age in which we are living. If the publishers were to profit by the destruction of the unsold copies we could understand the motive, and would consider it justifiable. But we do not see how they will gain. Only the owners of the existing books will have advantage by maintenance of the original price; and, presumably, the purchasers are mostly scientists who do not buy as an investment.

Why should not unsold remainders be held at the original price for future buyers five, ten, or more years hence? Even if sold at a reduction the publishers will be ahead more than by destroying the remainders. As the matter thus appears to us the proposal to destroy the remainders is wholly in the interest of the purchaser. This is difficult for us to understand when, as we believe, the work is purchased by scientists for its usefulness rather than as an investment. Surely science would be better served by the holding and subsequent distribution of the unsold work.

There may be a question here of the relation of the original selling price to the cost of production, which, however can only be considered with certain facts in hand. If at the completion of the work the publishers have not sold enough copies to pay for the publication, they do not add any to their income by destroying the remainders. If they have paid out on the copies sold and still have remainders which are to be destroyed, then it would seem that the subscribers take the loss. Perhaps after all we must realize that most publication, even of a scientific nature, is a commercial proposition, and is not to be judged by ideal ethical standards.

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## GENERAL NOTES

Conducted by M. H. Swenk

**Breeding of the Florida Gallinule in Lake County, Ohio.**—To my knowledge this is the first record of the Florida Gallinule breeding in this country. In late June, 1928, I discovered that a pair had remained, and judged from their actions and "talk" that they had a nest concealed somewhere along a certain point of marsh vegetation that extended into a swamp pond. Without a boat it was useless to search for the nest, but by keeping watch eventually I saw two of the young, and at the present writing (July 22) they can occasionally be seen along the edge of the water. They are in their first summer plumage.—E. A. DOOLITTLE, *Painesville, Ohio.*

**The European Starling in Calhoun County, Michigan.**—Late in December, 1927, the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) was first observed near Battle Creek. There was a flock of about forty-five, and these birds spent the rest of the winter in the vicinity. They fed on scattered grain found around the barn yards.

The birds were still present this summer (1928). Two nests, the first observed in the vicinity, were found. Both were in telephone poles along the roadside. Of these two nests, the eggs were destroyed in one while a brood of four was reared in the other. Nearly every orchard immediately in this vicinity had a pair of Starlings present, probably nesting.

The birds were identified by their brownish-black color, yellow bill and their noisy character. The eggs were blue.—LAWRENCE WALKINSHAW, *Battle Creek, Mich.*

**The Pollination of Scarlet Sage Flowers by Hummingbirds.**—The writer has been interested in the pollination of *Salvias* and other "hummingbird flowers" for quite a number of years. He does not happen to have the exact